



# New Mexico Environment Department

*PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT, PRESERVING THE ENCHANTMENT*

## Liquid Waste (Septic Tank) Program

### **Legislative Funding Request for Liquid Waste Disposal System Assistance Fund, NMSA 1978, § 74-1-15.1 October 15, 2012**

Cesspools and other substandard septic (liquid waste) systems can pollute groundwater and can pose hazards of entrapment, asphyxiation and drowning, especially to young children. In 2011, three New Mexicans fell into substandard septic systems. One person, a toddler, drowned in the raw sewage. The other two persons were treated for injuries and survived. Low income households can be at particular risk since they may be unable to afford the costs of repairing or replacing substandard liquid waste systems.

The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) successfully completed pilot projects to eliminate substandard liquid waste systems at indigent households in Dona Ana County and in the Middle Rio Grande Basin. One-time funding for these pilot projects was provided by a special legislative appropriation and by natural resource damage settlement funds provided by the Office of the Natural Resource Trustee. A total of 52 households were either provided with a modern septic system or were connected to public sewer if available. Construction was performed by a licensed contractor under a price agreement issued by the State Purchasing Office. The average construction cost per household was \$8,150.

#### Dangerous Cesspool Eliminated



#### Modern Septic Tank Installed



In 2009, the N.M. State Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law, Senate Bill 30 which created the Liquid Waste Disposal System Assistance Fund in the state treasury. The \$4 million appropriation in the original bill, however, had to be removed due to economic conditions at the time, and the Fund has existed with no money since it was created.

NMED is requesting \$1 million in funding that would be deposited into the Liquid Waste Disposal System Assistance Fund. This request, if approved by the 2013 legislature, would allow NMED to eliminate public health and safety hazards at approximately 122 indigent households throughout New Mexico who are at risk of injury from cesspools and other dangerous liquid waste systems.